

Samaritans Early Learning Centre Woodberry

INFORMATION BOOK FOR FAMILIES



Samaritans

11 Lawson Avenue Woodberry 2322

Phone: 49662695

A Project of the Samaritans Foundation, the social caring network and agency of the Anglican Church throughout the Hunter, Central Coast and Manning regions.

General Information

1. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Samaritan Early Learning Centre Woodberry. We hope you and your children have a long and enjoyable association with the centre.

We are a non-profit community based child care service, sponsored and managed by the Samaritans Foundation, Anglican Diocese of Newcastle. We provide high quality care for children aged from 6mths to 5 years. We are opened 49 weeks a year closing for 3 weeks Christmas break.

We are located at 11 Lawson Avenue Woodberry opposite Francis Greenway High School. This Centre was built by Maitland Council and is attached to the Family Centre. This Centre will cater for children aged from 6 weeks to 5 years.

2. THE CENTRE

The Centre is opened five days a week, operating from 8.30am to 4.30pm.

We are licensed to care for 29 children per day. Five: 6 weeks – 2 years Babies
Five : 2 years - 3 years Toddlers
Nineteen: 3 years - 5 years Older Children

3. THE STAFF

The Department of Community Services “Children’s Services Regulations 2004” specify a minimum number of staff that must be in the centre each day.

The ratios they require are: 0 to 2 years, one adult to every 5 children.

2 to 3 years, one adult to every 8 children

3 to 5 years, one adult to every 10 children.

We are also required to have appropriate qualified staffs that have been trained in Early Childhood Education. Staff also attends training throughout the year to keep abreast with current trends and to refresh skills

4. FEES & SESSIONS

Sessions:

As stated earlier there will be 29 children that attend each day. The day commences at 8.30am and concludes at 4.30pm. Due to licensing we are unable to have children before or after these times. Children must also be dropped off and picked up by a person over the age of 16 years.

PLEASE NOTE: Arrival and departure times MUST be strictly enforced due to licensing numbers.

Families are able to choose their days of care and no-one is restricted to certain days due to a set program. Family situations may change during the year so families are asked to talk to staff if they want to change days or require an additional day.

Fees:

The daily fee for the Centre is \$44.50 per day.

Annual administration fee is \$25.00.

\$100.00 Bond

Annual sheet fee is \$10.00 (cots only)

Families are able to apply for Child Care Benefit from the Commonwealth Government's Family Assistance Office which reduces your fees on a daily basis. There are procedures that must be followed in regards to Child Care Benefit.

5. PAYMENT OF FEES

Fees can be paid by Eftpos, Center Pay, or credit card. Office hours for payment are

Monday: 8.30 to 2.00pm

Tuesday: 9.00 to 4.30pm

Wednesday: 9.00 to 4.30pm

Thursday: 9.00 to 4.30pm

Friday: 9.00 to 4.30pm

The Samaritans has a very strict policy regarding overdue fees [please refer to policy document]. This policy may jeopardise your child's position in the Centre. If families are having difficulty with fees please see the Director.

6. WITHDRAWAL and LATE FEES

Withdrawal – When a child is to be withdrawn from care the parent is to give, two weeks notice in writing. This notice is required in order to provide the centre with time to fill the vacancy. If the child does not attend the centre during this period no refund will be made.

If you wish to cancel one or more of your days but have your child continue to attend the centre on other days, we ask that you give us two weeks notice of your intention to change your child's enrolment. If you have any queries about this please see the office or the Director.

Late Fee – A late fee is charged when parents collect their child/ren after the official closing of 4.30pm.
Parents are requested to phone the centre as soon as they are aware that they could be late.

7. MEALS

The Centre provides children with 50% of their dietary needs; we serve morning tea, lunch, dessert, afternoon tea and drink (only milk and water). The weekly menu is displayed in the foyer on the information board and all meals are prepared in our kitchen by a qualified cook.

Any food or drink found in your child's bag will be removed by the staff for safety reasons, due to children with allergies.

If your child has a special dietary requirement, you need to provide as much information as possible to the centres Director and provide a letter from your doctor.

The Centre also recognises that there are different cultural and religious backgrounds that also play a significant role in diet; we therefore encourage parents to notify us in writing of any specific instructions in this regard.

Children will not be given a bottle of milk or juice for rest or sleep as this may lead to tooth decay. When your child is having a Birthday, they can celebrate with us by having an ice-cream cake. The centre will provide the Birthday Cake at a cost of \$12.00. This can be ordered at the Welcoming Desk.

8. WHAT TO BRING

BABIES:

1. The Centre will provide cow milk and soy milk for infants, but parents must supply bottles (CLEARLY NAMED), as we find children have a definite preference for their own bottle. Families must also provide formula or breast milk for those children who require it. Please supply ample bottles in case of accidents. (Tins of formula can be left at the Centre if this is easier for families)
2. All nappies – either cloth or disposable nappies are acceptable, but please remember to provide more than enough in case of extra changes (6 nappies per day should be adequate). For families using cloth nappies, the Health Department recommends that the child's pilchers are changed every time the nappy is changed. So you must supply a clean set for each nappy change (i.e at least 6 pairs of pilchers).
3. If your child has a dummy than please bring it in a sealed container. Please write the child's name on both dummy and container.
4. At least two extra changes of clothes. Please clearly label all items of clothing, shoes and bag.
5. A legionnaire style hat clearly labelled with your child's name.
6. The Centre provides sheets for the children to use in cots: parents are charged an annual levy to cover the cost of supplying these. Please see the fees section of this booklet for more information.

OLDER CHILDREN:

1. Older children require a bag, a change of clothes (in case of messy play and/or accidents), a clearly labelled legionnaire style hat for outside play and sheets for rest time. Please clearly label all items, including shoes.

Please DO NOT SEND TOYS as the children become upset if they are lost or broken.

9. SETTLING CHILDREN INTO THE CENTRE

Families are encouraged to bring their child to the centre before their first day, so that the child can see the centre and familiarise themselves with their new surroundings. Settling into a new situation takes time and there will be a period of adjustment for both children and parents. The amount of time needed to settle children into the centre depends on many factors including the age of the child, their experiences of being in care, their temperament, the reactions of their parents, and so on. Visiting also provides the parents with an opportunity to meet the staff who will be caring for their child and to share information about the child.

Parents are welcome to ring and check on their child throughout the day, especially for the new starters.

10. ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

On arrival at Centre everybody is required to wash their hands before entering the Children's Rooms. There is a child size and adult size hand washing facilities and these are located opposite the Welcoming Desk. By doing this each morning it can assist in prevention of cross infection of germ entering the Children's rooms , helping to keep your children healthy.

It is a legal requirement that all parents/care givers sign their children in and out on the sign book. This is located in the children's rooms.

Children will only be permitted to leave the centre with either of their natural parents or guardian, or any other person specified on the child's enrolment form.

People collecting a child for the first time will be required to show some identification before they can take the child. If you need to arrange for a person not on the enrolment form to collect your child then you can ring, the centre during the day.

By law, we are not empowered to refuse access to a child by his/her natural parent unless we have written proof of a custody order advising otherwise. Please let the Director know if there are likely to be any problems.

Upon arrival and before you leave, it is advisable to wash your child's hands to assist in the prevention of cross infection.

11. SMOKING AND ALCOHOL

In accordance with Children's Services Regulations the Centre is a smoking and alcohol free zone at all times. Under no circumstance are families or staff allowed to smoke or consume alcohol.

12. THE DAILY PROGRAM

Our Centre follows a daily routine designed to best meet the needs of the children and the staff. The routine can be located on the program board inside the rooms. There is a variation in summer and winter routines. Routines are seen as a guide only and can be flexible to meet the needs of children and their families. Also on the program board will be the daily routine. The children are free to choose from a range of experiences presented each day and are encouraged to follow their interests. The program is evaluated each day in the daily reflection folder, which will be displayed on the centres table in the foyer.

The importance of the early years of the child is now internationally acknowledged as the time of most rapid learning and development. It is the responsibility of all early childhood educators to honour the importance of the early years by providing for the care and education of all children entering early childhood services. (Duffie 1991)

One of the ways that we provide for the care and education of the children using this service is through our program. The program outlines the activities that the children will be involved in during the day, and it is developed as a result of observations of individual children and a daily evaluation of the indoor and outdoor areas.

The children are free to choose from the range of experiences presented each day, and are encouraged to follow their own interests. Materials and experiences that are provided are mostly open ended, enabling children to develop creativity and problem solving skills and to construct their own knowledge. The program for the rooms are on display at all times for the parents to see.

13. CHILDREN'S HEALTH

When children who have not been in group care before start attending a child care centre, it is quite normal for them to experience more minor illnesses than they have previously, particularly runny noses, coughs and colds. We have many practices and procedures in place, which are aimed at minimising the chances of children cross infecting each other, however there, is very little that can be done about the transmission of airborne diseases.

Families are asked not to send a sick child to the centre; they can become quite distressed and run the risk of infecting other children and the staff. The Director and room supervisors are authorised to refuse a child admission to the centre if they feel it is in the best interests of the child and the centre.

(A child starting a course of antibiotics must be kept at home for at least 24 hours from the start of the first day of the course and other Exclusion Policy Guidelines are available for families).

Medication will only be given under the following circumstances:

1. A medication form must be completed and signed by the parent/guardian for all medication. The staff member giving the medication to the child will also sign the form after the medication has been administered.
2. Prescribed medication will ONLY be given if it is in its original container with the label clearly showing the child's name, the name of the medication, the administration instructions and the expiry date.
3. Children on long term medication e.g. asthma medication, must have a letter from their doctor stating the reasons for the medication and an action Management plan. In addition, a medication form must be filled out every day.
4. Over the counter cough and cold medications (e.g. Dimetapp, Demazin) will only be administered by staff if, the medication is accompanied by a letter from the Doctor authorising it. Medication will be given for 2 days only. Medication forms must be filled in for the administration of these medicines.
5. Herbal medications will only be given if they are accompanied by a letter from a person qualified to administer such medications. This letter must state the name of the child, the reason for the medication, and the dosage. The name of the medication and the dosage must also appear on the bottle.
6. Medications must be handed to a staff member after completing a medication form, and **under no circumstances is medication to be left in a child's bag or locker.**
7. Paracetamol may be given if we have authorisation from a Doctor. However, only one dose of paracetamol will be administered during the course of the child's day and it will only be given for one day. Under NO circumstances will paracetamol be administered without written consent by a family member and a Doctor.

If a child becomes ill whilst at the centre, we will endeavour to contact you, the parents, or your emergency contact people. In the event that your child has a temperature we will NOT administer paracetamol as we have been informed that this can mask serious illness. You will be contacted immediately to collect your child.

14. Positive Guidance

The Behaviour Management techniques utilized in our Early Childhood programmes help children develop safe and appropriate ways of interacting with others and the environment. The strategies used promote each child's ability to self-regulate their behaviour as they develop, leading to increased self discipline. Children are presented with positive models of acceptable behaviour. We believe that it is important to provide a peaceful and co-operative environment in which the children can grow and learn, and we demonstrate this in our actions, voices and the way we treat each other. Re-direction and constructive solutions are the techniques used by staff. Staff will build on the positives, providing attention and encouragement when positive interactions are taking place.

15. SAFETY & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Emergency evacuations are practised with the children and staff at 4 times a year. Evacuations may be necessary in the event of a fire, chemical spill, bomb scare, earthquake, gas leak, siege, or other emergency. Emergency procedures are displayed in both Children's rooms. Our evacuation point is near the garbage shed. If the building needs to be evacuated we will move the children across the road to Francis Greenway High School grounds and await further instructions.

16. ACCIDENT FORMS

If your child sustains any minor or major injury during the day then the staff member supervising that child at the time is required to fill in an accident form.

The accident forms are kept in the playroom, and parents must read and sign the form when they collect their child. By law we must keep these forms for 21 years. Staff will write "*Please see staff*", next to the child's name on the sign in/out sheets if an accident form has been filled out. When you see this written next to your child's name, please speak to a staff member, who will assist you by getting the accident form from the appropriate folder, and asking you to sight and sign it before you leave the centre. In line with Regulations a photocopy will be attached for you to take home.

If a child sustains a serious injury while at the centre, the parents will be contacted immediately and asked to come and collect their child, or if there is a very serious injury and an ambulance must be called, then the parents will be contacted immediately to inform them what is happening.

17. EXCURSIONS

All excursions will be conducted using the Department of Community Services guidelines as the minimum standards to be maintained at all times. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to attend excursions. For more information about excursions please see the centres Excursion Policy .

18. PARENT PARTICIPATION

Parent participation in the running of a centre is vitally important if we are to truly meet the needs of our families and the local community. Every family will want to participate in a different way and by a different amount, and we have a number of ways for parents to contribute, so that we can hopefully receive some input from every family during the year.

Among the ways we encourage input from families are:

- We encourage staff to talk to parents at arrival and departure times so that they can get a sense of how the parents are feeling and then bring any serious issues to the Director;
- We have feedback forms available for parents to fill out whenever they wish;
- We encourage parents to ring during the day if they wish to discuss any problems or check on their child.
- We have a section in our Daily Reflection book called parent input, where parents are encouraged to write in this section to give our centre feedback.

Parent meetings will be held throughout the year (approximately once a term) all parents are welcome to attend these meetings. The dates for the meetings will be advertised through the monthly newsletter and placed on the notice board in the foyer. Parents can place items on the agenda if they wish to. These meetings provide parents with an opportunity to find out more about what is happening in the centre, to contribute to the development of policies and procedures, and to assist in the establishment of long term goals. The group is seen as an advisory role and all final decisions regarding the operation of the Centre will be done by The Samaritans Foundation.

19. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Parents, who are unhappy about any aspect of the care their child is receiving, or has received while at the centre, are asked to discuss their concerns with the Director. If they still feel the matter has not been resolved, then they should take the matter to the Area Co-ordinator Children's Services at Samaritans. The phone number is 4969 0000

If you are still concerned you can contact the Centre's Children's Services Advisor from the Department of Community Services on 49313020.

We would ask you to raise any concerns you may have sooner rather than later, because unresolved issues can quickly get out of hand.

20. ANIMALS

For the health and safety of children animals are not permitted at any time without consent from the Director. When consent is granted the parents will be asked to stay with the animal and is responsible for any cleaning up that is required eg toileting.

21. CONFIDENTIALITY

All information that is shared between families and staff is considered confidential and will not be released to any other parties as per Children's Services regulations 2004 and Samaritans policies. All written documentation will be stored in a locked cupboard that will only be accessible to staff.

22. MEDIA

Any form of media including photography, videoing etc will not be done without the written consent of the families. This consent is situated on the authorisation page of the enrolment form. Under no circumstance will cameras be installed for persons to view outside of the Centre.

23. CHILD PROTECTION

Children and young persons have the right to grow up in healthy communities which offer safety from abuse, protection from harm, security and stability of care. Samaritans has a responsibility to promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of every child at the centre. Our staff is required by law to report to their Department of Community Services where he or she has reasonable grounds arising in the course of their work to suspect that a child is at risk of harm.

24. SUN PROTECTION

We recognise the importance of ensuring that staff and children are protected throughout the year from skin damage caused by the sun's harmful radiation. We ask that children and staff wear sun protective hats and clothing that covers the shoulders e.g. T shirts not singlets. Families are asked to provide a broad brim hat or legionnaire style hat for their child each day. In the summer months we ask that families apply sunscreen to their child in the morning and in the winter months, staff will apply sunscreen to the children before going outside. The staff will re-apply sunscreen before the commencement of the afternoon play. We use 30+ sunscreen.

25. POLICIES

The Centre has a policy manual which is available for you to read through, at any time. This folder is kept in the foyer on the centre's table. Please ask a staff member for assistance if needed.

Somewhere safe for me to stay
And eat and rest and love and play
My parents work but I don't mind
A loving centre is what I find
Rules are few and simple and caring
I'm learning about friends and about sharing
Time at this centre is loving and fun
And I'm so lucky I'm left here by Dad or Mum
Never be concerned when I'm out of your sight.
Samaritans makes sure I'll be alright.